who now believed the fort an easy prey. But Reidel knew better: he brought his gun—a 4-lb. Krupp breech-loader—into action, and his deliberate fire soon tamed the impetuosity of the enemy. Wherever they massed—and sometimes they appeared within 500 yards—he dropped a shell. For a few hours they threatened a siege, but long before nightfall a mounted patrol was able to scour the country over a radius of three miles without finding any enemy. What the Kafir loss was in this, their first and last assault on Fort Burgers, I cannot say. Much or little, poor Knapp was worth them all. For Kuhneisen’s bravery a rifle of honour was awarded him. I shall now go on with the story from where I dropped it.

Schlieckmann went by post-cart to Pretoria, and thence to the front; I followed with the volunteers. We were supplied with four waggons, six slaughter cattle, and a few hundred pounds weight of meal, sugar, and coffee for the journey to the capital. On the way the men behaved well, and the country people had no reason to complain. One fellow only had an adventure, which brought on him both ridicule and punishment. This man was fond of savoury food, and cared little for mess-beef. He accordingly pleaded recent rheumatism as an excuse for sleeping in farmhouses and out of camp at night. One evening—his first at this game—a terrible cry rang out from a Dutchman’s coach-house: the guard dashed in, and were instantly informed by the malingerer that a dreadful snake had bitten him, and even now he could hear it “hiss.” A light, soon struck, discovered a different state of facts. He wanted to steal fowls, but had not remarked a lonely goose amongst them. On his stretching out his hand to grab a hen, the watchful goose had hissed fiercely, and struck him with her bill on his bare arm; hence, from the sudden “hiss and blow,” he believed he had waked up a puff-adder.

It is needless to say he slept in camp ever afterwards.

Were I now inclined, I might, after the manner of bookmakers, fill pages with useless and uninteresting details of how we rode on, at what hours we inspanned (yoked in the bullocks), and trekked through that spruit (brook), and past
such and such farms; but this is certainly not my intention. In due time we reached Clarksdorp—a paltry village on the edge of the country comprised in the Keate award, of which more elsewhere. At Potchefstroom—the oldest and most respectable town in the country—we played cricket, and were soundly beaten by the English and Dutch youths. There a political enthusiast asked us to accept a fine copy of the British flag, so that we might march to glory under its honoured folds. This would have been treacherous to the people we came to help, so the offer had to be declined, with thanks. Everywhere we were treated with courtesy, even by those who were from conviction opposed to our mission. At the end of October we reached the capital, which is well enough known, from Mr Anthony Trollope's description of its unfinished and sardine-box-strewn appearance, to need no words from me in its praise. On arriving, however, an unpleasant incident occurred. Some young fellows who went there to join us had misbehaved en route and in the town, and by their conduct the character of the corps might be injured. At a general parade in the market square the delinquents were cautioned—two of them summarily dismissed the ranks—and others awarded various punishments. This had a good effect on the inhabitants, many of whom are English, and who now felt assured that the corps would be creditably led, and conducted so as to be a security, instead of, as they had been led to expect, a danger to law and order.

The President himself superintended the arming of the corps with Westley-Richards's breech-loading carbines of the triangle pattern—a splendid weapon—then and now very deservedly an almost universal favourite with the Boers. He gave us nine waggons, loaded with ammunition, food, and necessaries, and bade us God-speed in a few affecting words, in which he laid great stress on the fact that we were "Christians and subjects, as well as soldiers, and that our conduct must be marked by humanity, lest, afterwards, savages might say we were like unto them." On this subject he was most emphatic; and I am glad to say that, although I have vaguely heard of atrocities being committed by irresponsible individuals, I can appeal to every
European, be he merchant or missionary, in the Transvaal, to prove that they never heard of any act of cruelty or oppression attributable to the force under my command. The Government had failed to secure the troop-horses promised us, so we left Pretoria without them. The treasury at the time was nearly empty. I had to pay two men, and make some advances; but all Government could contribute to the military chest was £25 in small silver, which I took, and was grateful for.

On the 12th of November the corps reached Lydenberg, the capital of the north-east. Here it was again joined by Von Schlieckmann, who had in the meantime visited the fort and restored confidence and order, sadly impaired through his absence. The inhabitants of this town, as we had been informed, were hostile to the President, and looked with aversion on his new supporters. Notwithstanding this, we fraternised amicably, and by the time we left, the Lydenberg Volunteer Corps was as popular with the townspeople as one could wish. On the 13th we reached Kruger's Post, the residence of the Glynns and Erasmuses, where the Boers of the Origstadt ward lay in laager. This laager was simply a stone enclosure, bastioned and loopholed, situate on a running stream and in the middle of a flat, across which surprise ought to have been impossible. In the night we were awakened by the call to arms, but it proved to be occasioned by the return of twenty-four Boers, with one hundred allied natives, who had just made a very successful onfall on Maripi—a treacherous Kafir chief living below the Berg at Hellpoort. In the fight the farmers had lost one white man and two Kafirs. So far as I know of the affair, it was a perfectly justifiable, plucky, and successful raid. The leader—Mr Erasmus, born in Natal—is now a British field-cornet for the ward in which he then held office for the Republic.

In the early morning, preceded by thirty-six horsemen (forty-three horses had at length reached us), the infantry, fifty in number, marching with the waggon-train, we started into the enemy's country. We were accompanied by a Mapolander named Windvogel, or the Windbird, from his extraordinary speed and endurance. This generous, truth-
ful, and brave savage had suffered terribly by the enemy. His wives and children were slain by Johannes’s “volk” early in the war—the breasts of one of the women having been cut off by the murderous wretches while she was still alive. This horrid act was, through a misconception, or a misprint, by one of the colonial papers, attributed to the Boer’s Swazi allies; though it was really the work of our enemies, and the means through which we obtained the faithful services of Windvogel and his followers. We had also with us a prisoner named Kameel—a Knobnose Kafir—whose after-alleged treachery cost the life of the gallant Von Schlieckmann.

From Kruger’s Post the road to the fort lay up a narrow valley, from which, after an ascent of 150 feet, it stretched out on to a grassy plain, eight miles wide, called De Beers Hoogte or height. On the left of this—we were now going north-west—could be plainly seen the Waterfall Mountains, Johannes’s Kop, and the ridges that terminate in the cañon of the Speckboom, which flanked our course till it turned abruptly across it, at the mouth of the pass by which we should descend into the lowlands. The first water was at the bottom of a steep, rocky, but heavily bush-grown gorge, fourteen miles from our starting-point. Near this we slept, guarded and watchful. Morning found us ready to attempt the pass, which through a scene of gloom narrowed before us. The cavalry went ahead; infantry worked along the high ridges of mountain that overhung the road on both sides; whilst the waggons, now nearly worn out by their long journey, toiled along the bottom. At twelve in the day, a scout on the hills within 500 feet of the waggon-track shot a bull koodoo (a large long-horned antelope). Many other varieties of game were seen; and our spies informed us that, in a gorge three miles to the left of our path, a kraal of cannibals had been sighted. These cannibals have since been converted—or slain.

Just as the last waggon was within two miles of the mouth of the pass a wheel broke down utterly, and as the main body had to encamp on the river, I was left with twenty-four men to guard the wreck. This was my first real duty in Kafirland. I got the men into a safe place,
where, lying four yards apart, in a sort of hollow square, they passed the night; alternate men being kept awake in spells of two hours. Had the enemy scented the broken waggon and tried to loot it, half a hundred of them must have been shot before they could have broached cargo. In the morning, no alarm having occurred, the broken waggon's freight was transferred to the others, and with a lessened train we pursued our course.

From this place to the fort is only sixteen miles, yet we had to travel all through the day and the whole of the next night to reach it, in consequence of the hilly and broken nature of the road past the three kopjies (little hills) before mentioned, and round the base of Mount Moroné. On reaching, at sunrise, the slopes above our home, the guns saluted the new company. The journey was at length happily concluded, amidst the rejoicing of those we had come to relieve.

At 2 P.M. I was called to tiffin, where I met James Edward Ashton, acting surgeon to the force, and the other officers, the principal of whom was the lieutenant before alluded to as a failure. He had very martial moustaches, and was apparently clever and well bred. Of the surgeon I cannot speak too highly. He was the most amiable little fellow imaginable, from somewhere near Warrington in Lancashire. Everybody loved him, and deservedly so, for his attention to his sick, as well as his bearing in action, were alike admirable. He was, moreover, a combatant officer, and in the field did duty as an extra aide-de-camp, until some poor fellow with a bullet in his body wanted his services. After tiffin the captain ordered me to fall in the men in silence at 10 P.M.; cavalry to stand to their horses, all duly armed and equipped.

I then went on the rampart to view the country. Two columns of smoke—one from a point high on the Red Krantz of Dwarsberg to the north, and one west of the fort between Mount Moroné and the river—attracted my attention. I was told these came from the enemy's fires; and it was perfectly true. At the fire on the hill by the river, the forms of Kafirs could be perceived by the aid of the glass; the other lot were too far off for me to distinguish them, even in that splendid translucent atmosphere. The reason of their
being allowed so near was simply because Captain Reidel
was on leave, and the other artillerists were not up to much.
With me, from Pretoria, was a Captain von Spandau, of the
Royal Dutch Artillery, who came up for a commission with
the highest possible testimonials from his honour the Presi­
dent. He was asked to try his hand with the Krupp, and,
assisted by Bombardier Atkinson, an English midshipman
who had served in the Euryalus, he soon got a gun out and
pointed. They made the range 4800 yards, and at the first
shot the shell was plumped on the fire, scattering it in all
directions. We never again saw enemy’s smoke within
three miles of the fort.

At 10 P.M. the men were got under arms, were inspected,
and turned in again; but Von Schlieckmann told me to turn
out without lights, bugle, or noise of any kind, at 2 A.M. He
had information that a large number of cattle were in a kloof
seven miles down the valley; and he meant to surprise the
village, and take all the beasts he could get. He did not
expect serious resistance; the enemy would be surprised.
He told me later on, to keep thirty-eight men for garrison,
and give him all the cavalry that could be spared. The in­
formation on which he was acting he had received from
Kameel, whom he had pardoned for some past offences, and
meant to use as guide. Punctually to the hour appointed,
the men for the expedition formed outside on the parade­
ground. No light was seen or sound heard. The roll was
called in whispers, and all were ready, when, with a dreadful
scream, a man fell forward on his face in an epileptic fit. This
was afterwards looked on as an evil omen. Ashton came
into the fort with the sick man, and the troops vanished
into the bushes. Although the night was still, and the
river within a hundred yards, the sentries on post never
heard the expedition crossing the river. This I mention as
an example of the silence that must attend night movements
in Kafirland. Not a chain must jingle, or a word be heard;
and a man who would so far forget himself as to light a
match or speak should be fearfully punished. When the
expedition was well gone, and the fort drawbridges up,
Ashton demanded to be let out. He had been in with the
sick man, and must now rejoin Von Schlieckmann. No per-
suasion would induce him to stay. He fairly leaped his horse over the sally-port ditch, and rode after his doomed friend. The rest of the night passed off quietly. I remained for hours on the rampart; but morning broke, and the world waked up without sound or sight of conflict, or its African accompaniment—conflagration—being detected.

At half-past ten I was asleep, and was awoke to be informed that three horsemen were riding furiously towards the fort. The gate was ordered to be opened, and in a few minutes Otto von Steitencron, with Kuhneisen and another orderly, came in with the sad news that Von Schlieckmann and six men were shot, and the whole force scattered—part being mewed up with the wounded at some water near the mouth of Mahera's Kloof; that the captain had called for me, and they had ridden in for stretchers, food, and help. A relief-party was at once organised of twenty-eight men, carrying stretchers, brandy, and bandages. In advance of them, accompanied by the orderlies, I rode off to the scene of the disaster, which was at a great kloof in the Dwarsberg, down the valley on the right of the road leading to Secocoeni's.

Crossing the river by the same ford used by the expedition on the previous night, we had ridden not more than two miles when we met some cavalry returning with wounded men lying across their horses.

During the next mile we came across our Kafirs driving before them in triumph a few wretched goats, the capture of which had cost the lives and wrecked the hopes of so many. In another quarter of an hour we came out upon an immense cultivated flat, terminating to the right in a long, dark, and winding gorge, black with bush, and skirted by huge precipices of sandstone and granite. Into this we turned, following a Kafr path marked with tracks made during the night and morning by bodies of our own men. When we had got fairly within the kloof, we entered a bush of about ten acres, in the centre of which, a burnt village, with other sinister appearances, marked Von Schlieckmann's course. From this we emerged on another bare tract, from which again we passed into a similar but smaller bush, also shrouding burned huts. Here marks of recent fighting were plainly visible. By this time the precipices on both sides seemed
to close and frown most threateningly on our way, and the voices of Kafirs shouting and calling to each other, to be heard.

Riding out on the edge of a small stream, we now expected, being in sight of the last kraal—the only one unburnt—and within about a thousand feet of the end of the gorge, to come across some trace of the infantry and wounded. From the left, a Kafir called to us in Dutch, "Come a little farther till we kill you as we killed the other white men." Being but three together, the invitation was, of course, unheeded. We were within easy range, and did not require to get closer.

To attract the attention of our friends, wherever they might be hid away, we now fired our rifles in an order usually used for signalling. No response came, except the howling and challenging of Kafirs from the neighbouring rocks. The signalling by shots was repeated several times.

For an hour we wandered about from left to right, looking for the spoor, or some traces of the whereabouts of the main body. It was not until the arrival of the relief-party that we discovered a path to the extreme right—in fact, actually on the hillside—a short cut to the fort. The surface showing numerous boot-marks, proved it to have been used for the retreat. The dodging about of three white men right in the Kafir front had, however, not been without its effect. The Kafirs could neither make head nor tail of it, and were, by the mysterious movements, deterred from harassing the column retreating with the wounded which, we learned afterwards, had left the ground on the one hand, only a moment before we appeared on the other. Another accident contributed to our safety. The men with the stretchers had laid their rifles and canteens on them, for convenience in carrying, and the sun, blazing and glittering on the weapons thus borne, had misled the Kafirs, who believed the troops were carrying some new kind of cannon, or dreadful instruments of warfare, to a convenient spot for recommencing the action, of which the smoke still hung round the trees and bushes.

Our finally wheeling on to the right-hand path, where our movements were completely concealed by bush, confused
them still more. They could gain no clue to our intentions. This uncertainty of theirs undoubtedly prevented a renewal of the conflict, in which we must have suffered severely. After remaining in position long enough to ascertain that no attempt would be made to molest our return to the fort, we started, in Indian file, for home,—bearers and stretchers to the front, footmen next, officer and the two orderlies behind. In this order we again reached the Steelport River, to be met by the saddening intelligence that our brave commander was dead. The history of his disaster I shall briefly narrate. It is instructive, showing, as it does, that reckless courage and dauntless valour are useless amidst the rocks and stones of a Kafir nest.

A Private's Story.

"We left the fort at half-past two on the morning of Friday, 17th November 1876. At the sandy drift of the river the first mistake was made. The infantry lieutenant, who ought to have known better, hurried the men over the ford, without halting them to take off their shoes and stockings, which of course got wet and filled with sand. This made the subsequent march uncomfortable, and in some instances resulted in men being lamed for days. Kameel, who was acting as guide, led us round and round in the dark through all sorts of thick and thorny places, as it seemed to me, for endless hours; and we were halted five or six times to recover the road, which he pretended he had lost. The sun was very high before we came to a position in sight of the mouth of the kloof, which, had we been properly guided, we might have easily attained in two hours' smart walking. We must have marched at least twenty miles that night.

"The infantry were completely done up by this thirsty and toilsome march, succeeding so quickly as it did on the journey from the Diamond Fields, the effects of which they had not yet ceased to feel. The sun, shining with unclouded brilliancy on the unfortunate and weary men, added to their discomfort."
"At this moment Von Schlieckmann believed that his advance was still undiscovered. He was determined to do something, and after a short rest, sent in a few spies to view the enemy's position, and ascertain if there were cattle before us. Half an hour afterwards—two spies having come back—dismounting some of the cavalry, he advanced up the bottom of a gully running through the glen towards the enemy's position. The stillness was profound. Even the birds had left off twittering, in evident surprise at the strangeness of the intrusion of the filibusters and their horses on the scene. The infantry were directed to keep along the right-hand walls of the kloof, where, sheltered by overhanging bush, they might be in a position to be of use in the coming conflict.

"Turning an angle of the gully, the captain came in sight of the first village. To reach this he must cross a couple of acres of open ground. As he sprang upon the bank a rifle was discharged by accident, and a shrill and terribly prolonged scream rang out at once from an elevated point of rock on the right-hand escarpment of the mountain. This was instantly followed by the horn-blowing and drum-beating of the enemy's vedettes. Schlieckmann rushed to the village, which he found deserted. He sent orders for the remainder of the men to follow him, and dashed across the next open space at another village. A hot fire now broke out on all sides,—from both flanks, and from the front—from every cave, and terrace, and rock that could shelter a marksman,—a fire which never ceased rolling, pealing, and eddying till the final catastrophe took place, and the wounded were borne out of its influence.

"Halting for a moment at the second village, which was also untenanted, Schlieckmann sent six men and an officer to the left, up the rocks, to check the enemy's fire in that direction, and again sent orders for the infantry to be brought into action. The gentleman in command of them, however, who was now in a very wavering state of mind, fell back a few hundred yards, instead of going to the relief of his commander. Some of the men, indignant at this, broke from the ranks and rushed to the front. A few privates also detached themselves from the reserve of cavalry left with the horses,
and pushed forward to join their leader, under a withering and rapidly increasing fire.

"About a dozen and a half reached the captain, who dashed at the third kraal—a high edifice of stakes and rails defended by thorn-bushes and surrounded by a ditch. Here a couple of men fell. On reaching the gate it was discovered to be blocked with two trees, the branches pointed outwards, and the trunks lying inside the enclosure. Volunteers were called for to leap the hedge and pull away the obstruction. Shepherd and Gilbert—Englishmen—at once sprang over; and as they pulled in the huge trees, giving passage to their comrades, both fell seriously wounded. With a rush, however, the village was mastered. The end of the defile had now to be won. Schlieckmann, closely followed by two Americans—Woodford and Martin—with Dr Ashton, Kuhneisen, Wearne, Ribas, and Bayley, prepared for this last attempt. Behind some huge rocks in their front fought the best shots of all Kafirland. Schlieckmann lighted a cigarette, drew his sword, and sprang on a rock, calling, 'Lydenberg Volunteers, follow me! Come on! don't let your bravest men fall here alone!' A rush was made from the rear, but the wave had only reached the gallant leader's post, when he fell back mortally wounded. Wearne had fallen a moment before. The enemy still shot on; and it was with difficulty the bodies of the fallen were dragged by Ashton and others out of the fire to a bank by the stream-bed, where water could be obtained. By this time the whole kloof was black with smoke from the musket-fire and the burning villages. The enemy were heard yelling to each other to fly, when a stalwart Kafir—'Tsikiki—appeared on a rocky eminence on the right attack, and loudly called upon his followers, as well as the demoralised warriors of Mahera, who were falling back in all directions, to charge with their assegais (javelins) and end the conflict. 'Tsikiki was followed by the tribes of the Red Krantz. This added fresh and formidable numbers to the enemy's ranks at the turning-point of the fight. Mr George Eckersley, in the meantime, who had gone in command of the spies, had penetrated to the caves beyond the last village and made a dash for the cattle, which, all through the fight, were heard
lowing and bellowing as they were hurried towards other places of safety. Amidst the farthest rocks, by a waterfall, he found that some cattle and goats were actually tied by the legs to serve as a lure to bring the volunteers under the enemy's fire. A number of these were hastily cut loose by Eckersley and his followers, and driven down to where the main conflict was raging.

"But Eckersley reached the scene only to find the captain and a number of men shot, and that nothing was to be gained by continuing the fight. Then the retreat commenced. Some of the cavalry, on gaining their horses, hurried away with the more slightly wounded men. The men in rear—hastily reorganised by Woodford and others—made stretchers with their rifles and blankets, and commenced to carry out the wounded. After half an hour, and fired at all the time, they reached once more the mouth of that fatal glen.

"Here they were joined by Von Steitencron, who had been sent, as I have before mentioned, with a party of six to guard the left. One of this party—Davis, a Dublin Jew—had also been wounded. From this spot, at Von Schlieckmann's earnest request, Von Steitencron and the orderlies were detached to the fort to call me. After Ashton, in a short halt, had attended to the more immediate wants of the wounded, as the enemy threatened to occupy the bush between them and the fort, the line of march was resumed. The wounded suffered fearfully from thirst—the poor captain's tortures being almost indescribable. At half-past three the sad procession reached a rising ground from whence the fort could be seen. Von Schlieckmann, whose life was now ebbing rapidly away, pulled Ashton's head down towards him, saying, 'Little doctor, tell the President I was faithful to the last.' In another moment he was a corpse. It was wonderful how this hardy soul had struggled so long against death. The bullet with which he was hit must have weighed a quarter of a pound; and discharged, as it was, from a distance of but three or four yards, had carried away the right lobe of the liver, and smashed through the back, tearing off projecting portions of the backbone."
Such was the fight at Mahera's Kloof, described in the *ipsissima verba* of an eyewitness, one of those who were with the captain from first to last.

The volunteers had, except from nine to two on the previous night, been on foot and without sleep for twenty-four hours.

They had suffered horribly from thirst, were footsore and weary, and might have lost terribly had they been attacked in the bush on the retreat; their salvation from which I can only, as I have said before, attribute to what the Kafirs thought the mysterious movement of the relief-party which I had, almost accidentally, interposed in rear of the beaten column. Amongst the fallen men was William Wearne, also shot through the stomach, who died next day. The dead were buried with every honour on Sunday, the 19th. The wounded were lodged in the officers' quarters, which were converted into a temporary hospital. Half of the captured goats were given to Windvogel; and when the dead were disposed of, and the wounded placed in comfort, I set to work to examine and reorganise my command, which shortly afterwards stood as follows:—

Commandant—Alfred Aylward; Lieutenants—T. L. White, P. Bayley, Geo. Eckersley, Otto von Steitencron; Artillery Captain—Otto Reidel; Medical Officer—Edward Ashton; men, 108; horses, 66.

I found matters in anything but a satisfactory condition. The main magazine was in a cellar under the officers' quarters, in the centre of the narrow redoubt I have previously described. In each of the interior angles reed-houses had been built, behind which the fireplaces of their inhabitants had been most foolishly fixed. In fact, the fort was a slumbering volcano. During the absence of Von Schlieckmann on the recruiting service great hardships had been suffered by Reidel's small garrison, thirty of whom had given their statutory month's notice as wishing to resign.

The infantry lieutenant, really the senior officer of the fort, expected to succeed to the dead captain. Von Spandau, the Dutch artillerist, seemed also inclined to claim admission of his superior rank. Some Germans and Frenchmen were likely to mutiny; they had come to serve Von Schlieckmann
and him only. I, however, considered myself to be the man for the situation, who alone possessed the confidence of the Transvaal Executive and of my dead commander. I therefore removed the mutinous, gave leave of absence to the ambitious, and despatched as special messengers, anywhere and everywhere, those whose presence might lead to complications; and having placed a guard of my own private followers on the cannon and magazines, proceeded to enforce obedience. With the precautions I had taken this was an easy matter.

In order that the President might be properly informed as to the position of affairs, three messengers reached him—one, the infantry lieutenant, who could give his own account of matters; another, Schlieckmann's secretary, a German gentleman of repute named Wendelstadt, who had previously held an important mercantile position in Port Elizabeth. To these was added Adolph Kuhneisen, the dead officer's orderly, with whom my acquaintance was but a few hours old, but who had ridden beside me with the relief into the fatal valley of Mahera. On this man's probity all our hopes rested. He was despatched with the simple instruction to tell the truth, which he promised to do, and which I believe he did.

When the fort was reduced to order, and the discontented got rid of, we had to prepare for the advent of the deadly and pestilential summer. By the 1st of December, of sixty horses that had reached us, twenty-two were already dead of horse-sickness; a few had been stung by the fly in Oliphant's Poortnek—these had also died. Some recruits were coming, under Mr White, with thirty more horses, but they were as yet nearer to Pretoria than to Secoceni. There was not a truthful or reliable guide to be had for love or money. We could not even guess who were our enemies or who were our allies from amongst the tribes that swarmed on all sides of us.

Our communications with the rear lay through dangerous and dark defiles, liable to be cut at any moment by an enterprising enemy; in fact, at that very time there was lying unburied in the gloomiest part of Oliphant's Poort the body of an American, named Doane, who had been barbarously
murdered, and afterwards abominably mutilated, while carrying the post with Corporal Kettner a few weeks before. But the corps was still hopeful and faithful, and buckled to its work—the occupation of an exposed and unhealthy position—with commendable alacrity.

A week after Von Schlieckmann's death we started, nearly 100 strong, to avenge him. After a toilsome march we reached, unnoticed, the mountains on the right-hand side of the kloof. By daylight we had gained their summit, and established ourselves over the steep precipice from which the enemy had fired so well on the 17th. But to our astonishment nothing stirred in the gorge below. We waited like eagles on a rock till nearly noon, scanning and searching with field-glasses and with our naked eyes the gorge below; but the place had been completely evacuated, and we had to retrace our toilsome way down the mountain after a fruitless and fatiguing journey.

This, as we learned afterwards, is a usual thing with the Kafirs; had we returned in a month's time, we should have found the place once more alive with the enemy. It was afterwards stated, and, I believe, on good authority, that, on the day of Schlieckmann's attack, the enemy were prepared for him, and had close on 800 men, fairly well armed, and thoroughly well posted, ready to receive him.

Here it is necessary to remember that these men were not Basutos, but Knobnose and other hunter tribes, which, with renegade Swazis, were the only enemy the Lydenberg Volunteer Corps ever found opposed to them. The Basutos, as is stated, may be cowards. The Lydenberg Volunteers, for their part, have never met Basutos; for they have invariably found their enemies brave enough.

The men's time was now occupied building huts, digging magazines outside the fort, and excavating a chamber which could be used either as a store-room or as a prison. In this work a singular fact was revealed: the mound on which the fort rested had been the burial-place of some ancient race; the spade everywhere encountered the remains of human bodies, while broken pots, and urns of ancient earthenware, were turned up continually. Who or what this ancient people was, of whose bones we built our fort, has not since
A LOST RACE OF MINERS.

been ascertained. The remains of old furnaces, and indications that copper-mining and other enterprises had been carried on, at some distant date, by a people more civilised than the Kafirs, were frequently met with. No doubt, in years to come, scientific research and regular exploration will bring to light interesting relics of the lost race on whose graves we were treading. Some of us were of opinion that the plain at the mouth of the Steelport pass had been at one time the site of a large and populous city.

However, to return to my story. On the 15th December, the Landdrost of Lydenberg arrived, bringing with him the President's commission appointing me commandant—a fact that was speedily proclaimed on a general parade outside the fort, evidently to the great annoyance of the dwellers in the neighbouring mountains, who, thinking the unusual scene foreboded an immediate attack, lit up huge signal-fires, and alarmed the country in all directions. Arrangements were made by which I should meet Landdrost Roth monthly in Lydenberg to receive verbal instructions and settle accounts. This afterwards proved inconvenient, it being used as a handle by the enemies of the corps for misrepresenting the purport of our visits. In fact, they once put in the papers a statement to the effect that we spent our time going to Lydenberg once a-month on the spree.

On the occasion of Mr Roth's return, I delivered to him one "Andreas," an uncle of Secocoeni, who had been captured in one of Robus's patrols, to the west of Mount Morone. This man was extremely grateful to the volunteers for the kindness he had been treated with whilst a prisoner. He was eventually sent to the capital, and his evidence completely exonerated the corps from the ridiculous charges of cruelty and unnecessary blood-shedding that had been brought against them.

We had another prisoner, a very black little boy, whose parents were slain at the Red Krantz in one of Schlieckmann's raids. This fine little fellow, whose life had been saved by a Dutchman named Becker, was so terrified at the sound of the cannon, that, in mercy to himself, we found it necessary to send him out of the fort. We gave him to the kindly care of Mrs Glynn, an English lady, living at Kruger's
Post, pending legal steps being taken for his disposal by the orphan master. Many months afterwards I saw him the favourite playfellow of Mrs Glynn's son. He had already learned to speak a little both in Dutch and English, and was as happy as boy could be. In fact, he was in a fair way to grow up a useful and tame member of society. But Government, with a justice that savours sadly of injustice, and a kindness that would be better described as cruelty, tore him, shrieking, away from good Mrs Glynn, and gave him back to some of his surviving savage relations, who, as I am told, finding him a nuisance on the road to their mountain home, dashed his brains out.

Reinforcements reached us before the end of December, and an expedition went out against Umpok. This penetrated through the rough defiles that open from the Origstadt valley, and is memorable, because in it occurred the first case of the fever which afterwards proved so fatal to the Lydenberg Volunteers.

A man named Gardner took sick, apparently with a slight bilious attack, when riding near the old town of Origstadt: he was carried to Lydenberg, where he lay for months, narrowly escaping with his life. On this trip, a village with a vast store of corn was destroyed, in Seelas Hoek, but only one of the enemy, a rainmaker, was killed, although we enjoyed a running fight with a strong hunting-party of hostile Mapolanders, who discovered our vicinity through some nervous individual opening fire too soon.

Another expedition was undertaken to destroy some kraals situated at the foot, as well as on terraces, of the mountain on the opposite side of the valley to that on which Schlieckmann fell. These villages had been discovered by a patrol, which reported them full of men. The march on this occasion was accompanied by a cannon. The wheels of this gun were wrapped thickly with fresh green grass, and bound with raw hide. This was not only an important precaution against noise, but effectually protected the spokes and axles from being injured by bumping over sharp rocks, or plunging down stony places.

We left the fort by moonlight, crossing the usual ford, and gaining the bush-path without having, by noise or alarm of
any kind, exposed ourselves to notice. Kameel, against whom we had no proof, although he was strongly suspected of treachery in the affair of the 17th, accompanied the guides, who of course were selected from the patrol that had reported the enemy’s presence. I think he did lead us astray a little: he was, however, suspected, and a rifle to his ear induced him to find the road, if not with graceful alacrity, at least with dogged submission.

We reached a plain, from which we were divided by a broad and well-worn water-course, a few minutes before day-break. Here the gun rested in position, facing the mountain—a long unbroken range, varying in height from 1000 to 1700 feet, which, as I have mentioned before, ran down the left of the valley leading to Secocoeni. Half the cavalry were sent away to the right, with instructions to ride into the mountain-chain, then dismount, scale the rocks, perch themselves on the top, and await the result of our shell-practice against the villages. They were then to drive down the mountain, cutting the natives off from their caves, and forcing them out into the plain, where it was expected they would fall into the hands of Bailey’s troop, which was placed in shelter to the left.

When morning had fully broke, Reidel got the range and commenced shelling a large village, which was dimly visible where the plains and the mountains met. The progress of the bombardment was, as you may suppose, watched with much interest; the third shell, at a range of 3800 yards, burst right in the thatch of a gigantic hut, the very centre of the enclosure. It appeared to create a great commotion, and was immediately followed by smoke and flames, which were at once attributed to its effects. We could see, with the glass, figures rushing from the village; but, to our astonishment, before the gun was again brought to bear, these assumed the formation of a body of Europeans. At the same moment our attention was attracted by the strange conduct of Bailey’s troop, which a moment before had appeared charging down towards the fugitives. They had suddenly halted, and were repeating the private signal. A few minutes afterwards the matter was explained. It appeared that Mr White, arriving late, and finding the mountain too
high to scale in the time allowed him, had immediately, on hearing the first shot, rushed his men into the village, which he at once directed to be burned. During his execution of this, he discovered for the first time that Reidel was shelling the very kraal he was in. He had fortunately time to order his men on their faces before the next shell burst within a few feet of their ears. His only resource was to come out in front as quickly as possible, which he did.

All the huts and stores along the base of the mountain had been destroyed without resistance, and the whole troop went to breakfast on the flat by the gun, making a rather pleasant picnic scene, and waiting to see what would turn up. We expected a cart laden with provisions from the fort, which had been directed to trek down to us in the morning for ambulance purposes, if required. At 7 A.M. all was still as quiet in our immediate vicinity as if there were no enemy within miles of it. Some thought the country was entirely deserted as far as the Lulus, while others suggested the possibility of Secocoeni's having withdrawn to the other side of the Oliphants River, and retreated into the fastnesses of Matjaji.

As we sat facing the burning villages, Schlieckmann's Kloof lay about three miles behind us. Our view to the right and down the valley towards Secocoeni was barred by some hilly and broken ridges, lifting up into the steeper hills of Dwarsberg. But high above and far beyond their western limits, glanced and glittered in the morning sun the red rocky bastions and grey crags of 'Isepeke's Mountain.

Here at length fires began to flame and smoke to rise, warning all Kafirland that the raiders were on the road. An hour or so later a Kafir horn blew on the rocky summit over the destroyed town. Then screams and yells rang out somewhere high up on the precipitous sides of the mountain; voices were heard calling, and, as our spies told us, challenging us to go back to the place of our morning's work. This Von Steitencron wished to do with two men. As it was necessary to capture somebody who could tell us of the enemy's movements, I let him take twelve, with whom he immediately raced across the plain to the foot of the hills.

As he did so a puff of wind cleared away the last remains
of the morning mists above his head, and with the glass we
could make out a village, perched upon a terrace half-way up
the berg, and from which the cries and screams seemed to
proceed. Before his men had time to dismount, a volley was
poured into them from the rocks above. Leaving their horses
in charge of one mounted man on the plain, the little troop
dashed into the rocks, where the cover would shelter them
equally with the enemy. From this moment the ringing of
shots was incessant, and it soon became evident that more
work had fallen to our lot than twelve men, however brave,
could do. Our Kafirs, twelve in number, were eager to join
in the fray. Leaving instructions for the horses to be caught
and saddled, so that, excepting the artillery guard, all might
follow, I went across with them. When we reached the base
of the hill, which at a distance had appeared level and almost
unbroken, an amphitheatre 1200 feet high, crescent-shaped,
and with a terrace fortified by low stone walls, springing
from rock to rock, revealed itself. The width of this cres­
cent was about 650 yards. Its face presented a wild and
singular appearance. It would seem as if some vast eruptive
force had flung, from the top of the hill on to its sides, mil­
lions of tons of black and rugged rocks and stones, which,
piled in wild confusion and irregularity on top of each other
up the face of the position, presented innumerable caves and
crannies, from which, as well as from the stone walls, taunts,
jets of smoke, and bullets were continually issuing.

The main body of the volunteers quickly began to swarm
up the right and left hand ridges, everybody potting away,
whilst a few of us moved up the centre, firing when neces­
sary, and gliding from rock to rock, so as to be in a position
to keep the whole action in view. Several incidents peculi­
to Kafir warfare now occurred. The leg of a pot, fired from
a gun of gigantic bore, smashed away a huge piece of rock
between one Blackburn and myself. This was speedily
succeeded by a crashing sound as the body of a Kafir, rifle
in hand, rolled over and fell from a high rock in our front,
killed by a shot by a young Boer named Blignaut. The
enemy, between the pauses of the firing, began to talk and
interchange chaff with our men. One speaking in Dutch,
recognised a man for whom he had worked in the Diamond
Fields, and calling out to him by name, said, "Baas Tom, why do you Diamond Fields men shoot at us? what do you want? Put out your head and let us have a chance."

This was immediately followed by the discharge of two rifles, bringing the conversation to an end. Then they began to threaten our allies Kameel and Windvogel. This drew our attention to the first-named person. With commendable discretion he had taken the white band from his cap, so that the enemy might not recognise him. His figure, however, was conspicuous, slinking with his long gun from rock to rock, high up on the right attack. Being plainly visible to our lowermost men on the left, they missing his badge, and unable to distinguish one Kafir from another at so great a distance, immediately directed their fire towards him. Of course, in the locality he occupied, his companions (our own men) were continually jerking out wreaths of smoke.

The fight had now lasted twenty minutes, the enemy's fire was slackening, and the hill nearly gained—some of our men being already in the villages of the upper terrace—when three shots rang out from the position where the gun lay far off by the river. Seeing nothing was to be gained, and much might be lost, by continuing the fight, and knowing that immediate action must be taken to put a stop to the fire from flank to flank caused by Kameel's dispensing with his head-dress, I recalled the men. They were got out in safety, and a moment after, having gained their horses, the troop rode back to the gun, the shells from which now came screaming over their heads, to the utter discomfiture of a few of the enemy who were prematurely rejoicing at our retirement.

As the troop was forming, Windvogel, with an enormous assegai (javelin), executed with his followers a war-dance, within easy range of, and under fire from, the astounded enemy. He yelled, leaped, threw himself bodily into the air, went through all the motions of savage conflict, gesticulating, threatening, pursuing, stabbing the fallen, and generally celebrating his own exploits. As a final insult, he cut down some stalks of nearly ripe corn and held them up to the enemy; while his little tribe, with measured
though not monotonous tramp and chant, sang something which translates as follows:—

WINDVOGEL'S WAR-SONG.

(From the original Kafr.)

We ride and fight,
Basutos!
You hide in fright,
Basutos!
We slay and burn,
And home return;
You weep and mourn,
Basutos!

You pick and hoe,
Basutos!
You plough and sow,
Basutos!
We come and shoot,
And eat your fruit,
While you are mute,
Basutos!

Your war-song sing,
Basutos!
Why don't you sing,
Basutos!
Go tell your king,
And cattle bring,
And everything,
Basutos!

That we may eat,
Basutos!
Your cattle eat,
Basutos!
For we are braves,
And you are slaves,
And beaten dogs,
Basutos!

His performance received hearty acclamation in the way of a clapping of muskets and a shower of bullets.

When we returned to the gun the cart had just arrived. It had been attacked in the thorns, hence the recall. After completing arrangements for cooking and eating another breakfast, the whole moved homewards, unmolested save by a few shots, not replied to, from the direction of Schlieckmann's Kloof.
On the succeeding evening a discussion arose amongst us as to whether the Kafirs would now entirely abandon the scene of the day's operations; or whether they would imagine they had won a victory and try to still further secure themselves in the rocks and crannies we had left them. Mr White volunteered to go and burn the village on the terrace before the next sun set. After midnight he departed with twenty men for this purpose. He reached the place unobserved, hid away his horses under a guard, and followed by eighteen of the men, succeeded in reaching the top of the mountain. When the sun was a few hours high, seeing nobody to contend with—the mountain being apparently deserted—he descended the cliffs and entered the villages and huts for which we had been fighting the previous day. He found them full of corn, provisions, and utensils of all sorts, and with fires still warm, showing traces of recent habitation. As he had no carts or waggons with him, he applied the torch of civilisation to the whole, and then galloped back to breakfast.

This proceeding may seem harsh to persons at a distance, but it was necessary, as it proved to the enemy that we were likely to return again and again to complete our work in places once attacked by us. With our other mysterious and unaccountable dodgings about, such operations, though trivial in themselves, helped much to confuse and bother the unfortunate Secocoeniites. They henceforward made it a rule, as we were told after the peace, never to sleep in a hut, lest they might awake to find it in flames. They consequently suffered great hardships from sleeping behind rocks and in out-of-the-way places in a half-clothed and miserable manner within sight of their comfortable homes, to which they rarely ventured till broad noonday brought them some assurance of safety. All this may seem very unpleasant, but unpleasantness is inseparable from Kafir war.

It is as well here to describe the life led by the volunteers generally. Patrols were continually moving with letters, and as escorts, between the fort and Kruger's Post. Whenever men wanted permission to hunt in the surrounding country it was given to them, and in this way small parties, on whose movements the Kafirs could not possibly calculate,
were kept continually dodging about in the debateable land. Other fellows went fishing along the banks of the streams; while large parties maintained horse and cattle guards, and protected the house-builders and timber and grass cutters in the more immediate vicinity of the little stronghold. The bush between us and the Steelport River—and in fact everywhere outside a range of a couple of hundred yards—was preserved, and added to the secluded appearance and general picturesqueness of the place. Mere military men would feel inclined to condemn this allowance of cover so close to the walls. A moment's reflection, however, will show its necessity. While the bush stood around us we could always quit the fort and enter on an expedition in any direction without being seen; and as sometimes our duties compelled us to be absent for days on patrols and missions, taking us a considerable distance from the fort, it was frequently left most inadequately manned by fourteen or eighteen men, whose safety on such occasions was due to the fact that the Kafirs were unaware of the absence of the main body.

As early as the 3d December, to give confidence, I had pitched my own tent, and taken up my quarters with most of the officers outside the walls. No more molestation occurring from the enemy, this example was speedily followed by a majority of the corps. They built comfortable stake and reed houses outside, one of them large enough to serve as a ball-room, where, to the music of a good violinist, they frequently danced. Of course there were no ladies, but nearly half the garrison were compelled to shave the upper lip and enact the character. All cooking was carried on thirty yards outside the line of these houses. The angle of the river below the fort afforded a good bathing-place, which the men constantly availed themselves of. The rations were liberal, and good of their kind; and the men, generally speaking, enjoyed a healthy, innocent, and happy life. Of course they had a jollification occasionally. The arrival of a cart or waggon with luxuries or grog for sale or distribution was an event to look forward to. I remember on one occasion the lads had been entirely without liquor for three weeks, the Commissary having gone to Pretoria. The heat was intense; and although it was late in December
the country was fearfully dry, no rains having as yet fallen.

In the thirsty and thorny desert—for beautiful though it was, it was still a desert—the men longed (and I do not blame them) for some drink more palatable than mess-coffee or hot river-water. About ten o'clock one morning, two troopers arrived to announce the coming of a waggon, with its escort. They added to their news the gratifying information that the waggon contained a cask of liquor. It was, however, twelve miles off. All day eyes were turning towards the point at which the longed-for waggon, with its more longed-for load of liquor, would first appear. The fellows looked miserable as hour after hour sped on and it came not. Towards five in the evening, however, the cracking of whips announced its instant approach. I don't think there were ever so many willing volunteers at the unloading of a waggon before or since. The cask was got into the canteen—an open tent—and the thirsty multitude clustered round, pannikin in hand, to receive their allowance from the proper authority. A brass tap was got, and with a few blows of a mallet popped into its place. But when the key was turned, a flood of ginger-beer rushed out, to the consternation and sorrow of the beholders.

Words cannot describe the scene. It appears the Commissary had loaded up a wrong cask. But the boys were not always doomed to be thus disappointed; they had their sprees—and right jovial ones—at times.

It is an old proverb that there is a special providence for fools and drunkards. This was admirably illustrated at Christmas. A couple of bright youths, having taken too much grog, wandered away from the fort, and scaled the neighbouring stronghold of 'Tsikiki. The Kafirs, afraid of their mad and frantic capers, fled before them. They actually entered the chief's village, and bore back in triumph from it a Kafir drum, with some other trophies. We could not have penetrated under other circumstances, without much hard fighting and the loss of many lives, to the point that these reckless lads escaladed in mere drunken bravado.

There was nothing the Kafirs seemed so much to dread
A DEVIL-INSPIRED SOLDIER.

as the erratic and seemingly devil-inspired movements of a drunken filibuster.

One instance of this will suffice. Late in January, an incorrigible named Miller, having got drunk at Kruger's Post, was not to be found when the patrol he belonged to marched from thence to Fort Burgers. An hour after they had gone, Miller, still dreadfully in liquor, saddled up, took another glass of Cape smoke, and resolved to overtake them. He lost his road, and galloped madly about in one of the ugliest corners of the hostile ground, waving his rifle, shouting, and otherwise conducting himself like a lunatic. At length his horse stopped, and he was flung violently to the ground. No doubt, imagining he was attacked, he went through various awkward manoeuvres, pointing his gun in every direction where he thought an enemy might be hid, and, as the dirty state of his arms proved, firing several rounds at uncomfortable-looking objects. Either satisfied with himself, or thoroughly exhausted, he at length sank to sleep—his good and patient horse alone watching over his safety. He awoke long after midnight, mounted again, and seeing that the horse was a wiser brute than himself, allowed the poor beast to act as guide for both. Towards morning he arrived at a station. For this offence he was of course tried and punished. The sequel of the story did not reach my ears till long afterwards.

He had been observed during the whole of his mad career by twenty warriors, Knobnoses. These, flitting from hill-top to hill-top, at length traced him into the valley where the horse threw him; but utterly unable to explain his movements on any rational hypothesis, and bewildered by his astounding, and, to them, inexplicable capers, they arrived at the conclusion that he was a decoy, and most religiously avoided meddling with him.

But to return to the fort. Towards the end of December the enemy had been frightened out of an immense reach of country; and as, no rain having fallen, drought threatened them with famine, and rendered any attempts at agriculture by them impossible, we began to have an easy life of it.

During the week after Christmas a party of us visited the Gold Fields for the purpose of conciliating the inhabitants,
who had been led by a rabid party press to suspect us of hostility to their interests. Nothing could have been more disgraceful than the means adopted to blacken the character and reputation of the corps with this community. It will hardly be believed to what extremities of vicious intolerance party spite had led the partisans of annexation. For the truth of the following disgraceful incident I can vouch. On the day when the news of the gallant Von Schlieckmann's death reached the field, one of its leading men—a member of its protection association—sent from the committee booths a bottle of champagne and a glass to the venerable magistrate, with "his compliments, and that he must drink to their happy release from the captain, and to the speedy destruction of his corps." The ruffian who perpetrated this outrage was spared from the fate he so justly merited only because of our desire to avoid any act which might involve the President's Government still further with the English party. As I have here drawn the distinction, I think it as well now to state what was the composition of the corps as regards nationalities at this period. Of its officers, one was an Irishman, one an Englishman (White), one (Von Steitencron) an Austrian lieutenant of fifteen years' honourable service. The other lieutenant was a Natal-born colonist. The sergeant-major—the finest-looking man in the corps—was the son of a distinguished English general, and well worthy of his parentage, being an honourable and fearless man. The sergeants comprised a Dane, a German, and a Swede, with five English or British-born subjects. The quartermaster and chief of police—Ryan and Beeton—were the one an Irishman and the other an English Africander. The medical officer was also an Englishman; and of the rank and file, six were Germans, two Americans—or rather Irish Americans—and three Belgians. There was a Frenchman from Mauritius, and six Dutch Boers; while the remainder were Scotch, English, or Africanders. Taking the whole corps throughout, a more respectable body of men could hardly be brought together.

They were called mercenaries whilst in the Transvaal service. Most of them have since proved themselves good soldiers, at a much higher rate of pay, under the English.
Von Steitencron, who served under Captain Carrington in the late colonial war with Kreli, has received the highest commendation from his superiors. Sergeant Degenkolw, and nine others, have since fallen with honour while serving under Captain Clarke. If these men were mercenaries and cut-throats under the Republic, our own flag is open to any reproach attaching to the employment of such troops.

In the beginning of January it became currently reported in the town of Lydenberg that Umsoet had expressed his contempt for the volunteers, and wished to see them at his stronghold. We were weakened at this time by having to furnish a garrison of thirty men for Johannes' Stadt, which had fallen.

A party of Boers, under field-cornets Scutte and Erasmus, proposed to co-operate with us in an expedition against the challenger. We had no native allies or guides except Windvogel and his brothers. We were therefore glad to accept of the assistance offered us; because the Dutchmen could bring a hundred tame, armed Kafirs, with their Commando.

In consequence of this, an agreement was made by which, in the event of co-operation, all plunder should be divided, share and share alike, between every man present at the fight in which it would be taken.

On the 9th, twenty-three Boers, under Scutte, with a body of Kafirs, arrived at the fort, where they were hospitably received, being provided with baked bread, meal, sugar, coffee, ammunition, and eight rifles. The field-cornets asked for five days' time to send spies through the country in front. This was granted, and preparations went on pending their return. During the interval a patrol was made to Schlieckmann's Kloof, where a few shots were exchanged. Several plans were proposed and discussed, but the reports of the spies proved very contradictory and unfavourable. A patrol of six men, however, went through the Steelport Pass into the valley at the foot of Umsoet's mountain. They saw some cattle on the sides of the hills, and returned, reporting that they had been discovered.

Another party got into a safe nest among some rocks near the same spot, where, lying still on their faces the whole
length of a summer's day, they watched the movements of the enemy coming and going all round them. Here they had nearly been found out, but their coolness and presence of mind averted the danger. Two large imambas—the most poisonous of all African snakes—were discovered amongst them at a moment when several Kafir men and women with two dogs were within a couple of yards of the rock on which they lay. It took undoubted nerve and courage to remain perfectly quiet and silent, with the poisonous reptiles gliding about between their legs, and in some cases over their bare necks. However, not a word was spoken. The Kafirs passed on, and the snakes coiled themselves up most lovingly together and basked calmly in the sunshine.

On the return of the patrol, it was resolved to proceed at night, with as many men as could be spared, through the Steelport Pass, so as to secure, during the hours of darkness, a position a-top of the mountains for our Kafirs; whilst the cavalry should hide below in some of the water-courses, running into the Steelport River. But as this way was impracticable for wheels, a gun and accompanying cart were sent by a long detour round the south and west of Mount Moroné to the nearest drift to the scene of intended operations.

All this part of the plan was successfully accomplished. With 46 volunteers, 23 Boers, and 120 Kafirs, we reached one morning, by half-past three o'clock, the middle of some extensive corn-fields, on a plain between the Steelport River and the foot of the high mountains that sheltered the enemy's villages. Here the Kafirs brought by the Boers shrank at the last moment from the task of scaling the gloomy and sombre peaks that towered above them. As silence was imperative I simply ordered them into ambush. Then dismounting twenty-three of our own forty-six men, I put them in charge of Thomas L. White, who, with them and Mr. Eckersley and Windvogel's people, were at once despatched to escalade the heights under the following orders: They should remain in a secure position till any hour, no matter how late, at which the Kafir cattle might be driven out of the kraals, and spread well over the grazing-ground between the mountains and the stream; then they must initiate matters and make an attack. We, with the
Boers and their Kafirs, should remain below until the fire of the mountain-party would call us out from our ambush; then the rest of the volunteers would make their way to White with the horses; when the whole, mounted, could act as circumstances might require. Accordingly the dismounted vanished into the hills, while we struck away in the ravines.

I was well aware that we would have to lie still a long time, as the Kafirs never let their cattle out till near noon. I was by this time acquainted with their habits, and knew that before daylight every warrior would come out of his hut and listen with most intent patience for every sound that might betoken the approach of a foe in that chilly hour which is generally selected for morning attacks. I also knew that when daylight had fully dawned they would sleep again, and that it would be very late in the morning before the men and cattle-herds would commence the ordinary operations of the day.

Before the sun had risen I was asleep, with most of the men, notwithstanding the discomfort created by our bodies being literally covered with ticks and creeping things, which swarmed on us in endless variety from the grass and the bushes that sheltered us from unwelcome eyes.

About eight I was awakened by the neighing of a colt which some foolish young farmer had permitted to follow its mother, which he was riding. This sound was most alarming, as if heard by the Kafirs it would completely ruin our plans. The field-cornets began now to be annoyed by their men, who insisted that nothing was to be gained by lying still so long, and some of whom were no doubt of opinion that our foot-marks in the open corn-fields must long since have discovered our presence. In vain I reminded them of our agreement with Mr White, and of the danger to which a premature movement on our part would expose him. After much talk I succeeded in obtaining an hour's delay, but a restless spirit was upon them, and being all volunteers under no discipline, and subject to no punishment in case of disobedience, it soon became impossible to restrain them any longer. At ten o'clock they rode out, turning up the valley along the course of the river.
Their horses' heads had hardly cleared the bushes when ear-splitting shrieks arose along the mountain; and we were barely mounted, and had only commenced leading our comrades' horses into the plain, when a sharp firing began crackling along the ridges of the Berg. In order to observe the action, and to put ourselves in a position to relieve White as soon as possible, we rode out to within 400 yards of the base of the hills. As the firing increased, the scene along the mountains, which terminated about eleven miles to the west in a stupendous cliff, became extremely varied and interesting. As signal-fire after signal-fire was lighted, broad columns of smoke rolling into the air, and repeated from summit to summit, quickly told the warriors of Umsoet and Mapethle that an enemy was upon them. A party of ours, under Mr England, which I detached to penetrate a valley on the left front, was driven in on us by a furious fire; while all along the woods that fringed the sides of the steep hills in front of us, jets of smoke marked the downward progress of the volunteers. As the crackling and flashing approached the bush where the hills met the plain, individual forms of combatants could be made out; and then, coming swiftly towards us, there broke out from the dust and smoke a small mob of cattle, quickly followed by the skirmishing-line running rapidly in.

Three villages were left behind them in flames. The cattle with the Kafirs being permitted first to pass through us, the storming-party mounted their horses. White and Eckersley told me that we had missed a magnificent prize. They had seen from their elevated position two mobs, numbering thousands of beasts, before the alarm, coming down towards the feeding-grounds, but which, on the too early disclosure of our presence, had been and were now being hurried into distant and inaccessible places.

At this moment occurred a revolting incident, which, as it illustrates the character of the warfare waged not only by the enemy, but by all Kafirs, I shall describe as it occurred.

At the war-dance, before the expedition was undertaken, an aged Swazi, when his turn for display came off, had told us that he was an old man, that he had killed nineteen persons in his lifetime, and had joined us because he could
not sleep in the earth till he had completed his number to twenty. As the troop was wheeling off to follow our retreating cattle and Kafirs, this man danced, with reeking assegai in hand, covered by his shield, decked with monkey-skins in all the glory of native full-dress, up to where we were consulting. He was literally mad with fury: at each stamp he drove the sand into the air as a buffalo would; he writhed, wriggled, plunged forward, fought with and slew imaginary foes without number, defying, threatening, and boasting over the slain by turns. At length he straightened himself up, and made his oration. He wanted to tell me that he had slain "his twentieth victim, and a little one over:" he was perfectly happy; he had killed a woman and a child. I vainly endeavoured to point out to him that such useless barbarity could add nothing to his reputation as a warrior.

The enemy diverted my attention effectually from his proceedings. They began to appear at many points along the sides of the hills; in some places they appeared to be dropping like monkeys from crag to crag; and it was easy to see that if the Lydenberg Volunteer Corps was to be preserved, it must seek a better position for fighting than a valley surrounded by mountains, and from which egress, in case of a struggle setting in, would be difficult. We therefore rode back towards the point where we had crossed the river during the previous night.

As we did so, the rear sections, with all the officers, had twice to turn to drive off the enemy, who began to torment us from behind. Facing about, Von Steitencron charged at them and silenced their fire to the right. A few more of us galloped to the left rear, where the shooting began within thirty yards, and where a duel, muzzle to muzzle, between Lieutenant White and a powerful native added to the interest of the affair. On this occasion we all had some narrow escapes. However, in twenty minutes we rejoined the main body, with which we soon reached the cannon, just where we expected to find it, Reidel having accomplished his march most successfully.

The bullocks that drew the gun were running loose, and the men were making coffee; while a Kafir on a neighbour-
ing rock was conversing and expressing his desire to be in-formed as to the nature of their business in that direction.

This thing could not last. The whole country was alarmed, and the enemy's skirmishers within 300 yards began to pop. The ground all around us was of a loose calcareous nature, and occupying as it did the space between mountain and river, was torn and cut up in every direction by deep white gullies, by which Umsoet's people were now approaching us from many sides at once, and with perfect safety to themselves.

The ridges between these gullies afforded our enemy additional shelter, being grown over with scrubby bush. Half the cavalry were sent on to cover the passage of the gun through the river. In a quarter of an hour, protected by the remainder of our men in rear, it got through in safety. At this time the Boers rejoined us, having found nothing. They had, however, seen the cattle that had been reported, and now saw and acknowledged the error into which their impatience had hurried them.

A smart fire breaking out near the bank of the river, three of them very gallantly rode over close to the enemy, engaging them at short range. Erasmus and Vandemerwe particularly distinguished themselves on this occasion; and a few dead bodies which floated down the river amply proved the accuracy of their aim.

We had now a tedious and dangerous little march to accomplish. The utmost speed of the cannon and the cart was two miles and a half an hour; and they had to pass through a place where the road led under a large hill, occupied by the remains of Johannes's people, and towards which Umsoet's boldest men were making their way to cut us off. Desirous to secure a position, a small party of us trotted on. Here a bit of prudent calculation marked the conduct of some of our Dutch countrymen who were making their way home. Just within range of the hill, where they could see the road leading out under it, they got off their horses and sat down comfortably to smoke by the roadside, chaffing and joking with us as we passed, asking what was our hurry. It was all soon explained. It was well we reached the hill in time. One sudden volley rang out from
RAPIDITY OF THE BOER LIGHT HORSE.

its cover; but the enemy, surprised at the speed of our motions, vanished at once. In fact, they were not yet in sufficient numbers to obstruct the march. Hardly had the sound died away when cluttering and racing along the path came our friends that had been smoking. They had secured their object—we had drawn the enemy's fire, and the coast was clear.

The cart, after one upset, was got safely through the pass, and in an hour we were all upon high and open ground, where, if the enemy pursued us, we could meet them with advantage. The extraordinary rapidity of the movements of the Boer light horse was here peculiarly noticeable. They went twelve miles to the fort, packed up their traps, and had ridden in to Kruger's Post, thirty-five miles off, before our advanced files were home.

There are undoubtedly brave and excellent men amongst them, but the youngest boy, the greatest coward, or the most ignorant recruit, can claim a hearing for his opinions, and demand that his judgment must be accepted on the line of march or in the field, as if he were the hoariest and bravest veteran of them all. This leads to their continually, in deference to each other's opinions, stopping to take counsel on points which can properly be settled only by some authoritative decision.

This, with their principles of equality which accompany them into the field, is the cause of their failures. If, however, from a multitude brought together, only such were taken as would volunteer to obey implicitly, the troops so picked would be almost invincible as dragoons. Their patient endurance of hunger, thirst, long journeys, watching and privations, makes them resemble, in some respects, the Indians of North Mexico.

They are not soldiers, and perhaps they never will be; but, as a rule, they offer materials for the construction of the most intelligent and active cavalry force in the world. On the occasion of this attack on Umsoet I gave them no share of the plunder. This was partly because their Kafirs had not all accompanied our detachment to the ambush a-top of the mountain, and partly because of their own impatience and breach of agreement.
While they had lain at the fort some of their prejudices were strongly displayed. The night before the march a few of the elders, attracted by the sound of the music, looked into the filibusters' ball-room, where various couples, shaved and unshaved, disported themselves on the floor. "My goodness!" said one old gentleman, "Captain Aylward, those Englishmen are soul-less devils, to dance like that when they may be all killed to-morrow!" Just to amuse him I looked in, when I found, as usual, that the dancers, most of whom were Africanders, could all speak Dutch. I called them, one after another, for his inspection, when he was still more astounded to discover that some of them belonged to eminent Boer families, whilst the majority claimed Africa as their parent country. Peace be with him! the old man was astonished, and, I fear, disgusted.

But to return to the expedition. The next day all were again safely within the fort. There had been a great many narrow escapes, but no loss of life on our side. I have been particular in describing this affair, because its effects upon the Kafirs were outrageously out of proportion to its real importance. They believed us omnipresent, and christened us "wild dogs" because of our ubiquity and speed. They never knew from this when to expect us, or to what lofty height they must look to see us rushing—apparently from the clouds. There is a great difference between fighting against brave and disciplined forces who, worked on fixed principles, hold positions only for definite and intelligible reasons, and fight not only with a will but with a purpose; and the sort of warfare we were engaged in. We speedily learned that to lose men for a position of no value to either party when gained, and whose possession could have no possible influence on the result of the war, was simply folly. The Kafirs' system, if they ventured to attack, was simply to make a snap and get away as quickly as possible. If we attacked them, unless specially ready for our reception, their unprepared outlying people ran in at once towards the first rocks that offered shelter. There they would begin to resist, falling back as they were forced from one rocky grotto to another, and detaining us as much as possible in our approach to the centre of the stronghold. This was almost
invariably like a rabbit-burrow, with this difference, that instead of grains of sand and roots of trees, nothing but rocks, stone walls, caves, and crevices in the cliffs presented themselves. It was simply wonderful into what a little hole a Kafir could insinuate himself. Sometimes, however, three or four of them would get together in one spot—generally a small cave almost inaccessible from either above or below, and which could be only approached by working along the sides under the fire of dozens of other caves and loopholes, every one of which seemed scooped out for the especial purpose of creating a cross fire. To force home the attack on such positions is the greatest folly an officer can be guilty of, especially if he is working with only small numbers. Let us suppose that only two or three of his men are hit in gaining the principal platforms: they will have to be carried out of fire slowly, and with great inconvenience and trouble. If the troops should be repulsed, unless they have immediate access to a very open country, great disasters may occur; in fact, if the enemy find the retreat hampered with wounded, they may worry one sorely. New officers occasionally make the great mistake of considering that they have driven the Kafirs from every wall and kraal they and their men may have succeeded in gaining in the beginning of a fight. The retreat from wall to wall and kraal to kraal, especially in broken and mountainous country, is as much the Kafir's method and manner of fighting as the bayonet-charge used to be the peculiarity of the English. The great secret of Kafir warfare is to terrify your enemy; to make him unhappy; to leave no path or road, no glen however deep and dark, and no mountain-top however high, where he can hope to avoid you.

Patrols even of small numbers must be organised every day. These, selecting the best and highest ground, and moving with every reasonable precaution, continually meeting, changing their course, appearing and disappearing at distant and unexpected places,—will, by their moral effect, reduce to terrified submission any Kafir tribe in the world. It breaks their hearts, sitting behind their rocks in chosen positions, to find that you have learned their own game, and know better than to throw away men fighting for fifty or a
hundred yards of cliff, which, when captured, would not be worth the heel of an old boot. A good plan, however, is to make reconnaissances occasionally against the chiefs' strongholds, commencing the fight, exploring the position, and drawing your men off before the affair becomes too serious. This wastes the Kafirs' ammunition, and as they always attribute the worst possible motives to your every action, causes them many a sleepless night. As a rule, a repetition of the reconnaissance, if stealthily made at any time within a week, will find the place deserted.

The middle of January found us extending the fort and improving the houses, as the lateness of the arrival of the rainy season, with the intense heat, threatened a possible outbreak of sickness. The war was languishing, and I wrote to the President, consenting that the corps should be reduced to 100 men, on condition that horses should be re-supplied more promptly than they had been.

Unfortunately a fresh band of recruits were announced as on their way to us from Pretoria. These were under the command of a person calling himself "Gunn of Gunn," and sometimes "The Gunn of Gunn." He was a handsome, soldierly-looking though rather foppish man, with a most engaging, and apparently candid, manner. He, however, overdid his part a little, having the unblushing impudence to sport, not only the Iron Cross of Prussia, but the Victoria Cross, won, as he asserted, in some hairbreadth Indian adventure. His conversation was suited to the character he assumed. He knew Scotland better than any one I had ever seen or heard of; and he interlarded his accounts of the places he had visited, and the castles he had been welcomed at, with so much physical fact and correct description, that many took him at his own valuation, and believed him to be the chosen companion of men of the highest rank and repute, whilst he was merely a clever and plausible humbug. Is there a "Gunn of Gunn"? If there is, and I were he, I would send my gillies, if necessary, ten thousand miles over sea and land, till they had scourged the impudence of this claimant to his dignity.

How he got into the Transvaal service at all is easily told. A Mr Perrott had been instructed by Schlieckmann to beat
up for more men on the Diamond Fields. Perrott was sick, and gave over the work to his boon companion and brother convivialist, "The Gunn of Gunn," who, with five decent men and twenty ruffians—the sweepings of Kimberley jail—entered the Transvaal, and introduced himself to Mr Burgers as an officer in search of employment. He actually stuffed the President with the tale that he had been distinguished on the special staff of his Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Prussia; so that his Honour, not knowing what to make of him, told him to hurry on to Fort Burgers, shrewdly calculating that there, at least, he would meet with people able to estimate correctly the exact value of his pretensions.

"The Gunn of Gunn" had an amusing side to his character. He was, in fact—although forty-five, and a Scotchman—the very counterpart of some of Lever's reckless heroes. He was nothing if not extravagant and bombastic; and he ran his pretensions and their successes to the utmost while they lasted. In Pretoria he added nine other sans culottes to his band, for whom he had supplied the following extraordinary costume: Caps and havelocks, blue hussar jackets, with yellow braid, colourless cord knee-breeches, with stockings, boots, spurs, shoes, veld-schooons, and every conceivable form of disguise for the foot. But his most magnificent idea was when he established two gallows-glasses and a piper, whom he compelled to attend on him, as if he were indeed a "Lord of the Isles." His pretensions met with a ready acceptance among a certain set in Pretoria. He put no bounds to his extravagant insolence, and night after night entertained his friends in the Edinburgh Hotel; while his piper (a real Scotchman in real Highland togs, and armed with real Highland bagpipes) strutted fiercely up and down in front of the great man's mess, proclaiming in hideous, ear-splitting music the fame and the triumphs of his chief and his clan.

Having christened his gang the "Gunn Highlanders," this modern Con Cregan was at length induced to start for the front. The excesses committed by his men along the road attracted considerable attention. He added to his numbers a deserter, who was even then a prisoner, having
been placed in his custody for conveyance to Middleburg, to take his trial for a crime of abominable obscenity. He also picked up a man we had just expelled from Fort Burgers, and banished from the war district. "The Gunn of Gunn," knowing that when he reached the fort he would have to confront German and Austrian officers, as well as others who had known him and watched his career, with amused interest, from 1871—did his utmost to avoid completing his march. He delayed so long on the road, and in Lydenberg—all the time demanding immense supplies of goods and provisions—that the Landdrost was compelled to suspect him of harbouring ulterior designs. What these were we afterwards discovered. They are of no public interest, as he was never permitted to initiate them.

When his presence in Lydenberg was reported at the fort, an order was at once transmitted to him to move up at once. The adjutant, White, subsequently called on him, and vainly endeavoured to induce him to obey the district commandant. "The Gunn of Gunn" was fertile in resources and fruitful in excuses; and it at length became necessary to ask him by what commission or authority he was marching about the country, with an armed band, yept the "Gunn Highlanders"—a body unknown to the law, and who could not be permitted to carry on their intrigues and drunken capers unchecked. He refused to give any authority, alleging that he was promised the command-in-chief by the President, and was independent of any lower functionary. However, he moved his main body as far as Kruger's Post, whence, with his staff and his piper, he again returned to Lydenberg, and continued his course of delay and intimidation. This became unbearable, and summary measures were resolved upon.

It was impossible to allow the "Gunn Highlanders" to remain at Kruger's Post, whence they might easily march to the Gold Fields, where the malcontents would have been only too glad of their assistance to drive out the constituted authorities, and commence a sedition which would have immediately placed the Europeans and Boers of the district in a position of hostility to each other.

Taking the cavalry from the fort to Kruger's Post during
the night of the 24th January, we succeeded in cutting the
mutineers off from all chance of escape, and arresting "The
 Gunn's" lieutenant—a well-meaning though deluded man, a
native of Lancashire, named Styles. On the same day war-
rants were taken out for the arrest of "The Gunn," and
Cooper the prisoner whom he was harbouring. An inter-
view extracted from him a promise that he would proceed
without further delay; but on the same night, it being ascer-
tained that thirteen of his men were forelaying the drift on
the main waggon-road, with evidently desperate intentions,
"The Gunn of Gunn" received notice that he and his men
would be treated as rebels in arms if the fellows were not
moved from their threatening position and marched at once
to the Steelport.

This seems at length to have aroused him to a sense of
his danger. The next day he actually commenced his
march, and entered the defiles leading to the low country.
He was followed by a large force, who carefully watched
that none should escape, or conceal any arms, or make away
with the valuable property "The Gunn of Gunn" had ac-
cumulated, and which accompanied him, loaded on three
waggons. When he reached the vicinity of the fort he took
up an independent position. His hours of liberty were,
however, numbered.

On the second day a peremptory order that he should
parade his force for inspection reached him through the
adjutant; while, at the same time, a band of mounted men
galloped off with his cattle and horses, leaving him without
any means of transport whatever. At the moment his squad
commenced their march for the parade-ground, another com-
pany left the fort and secured his camp. When the now
uneasy mutineers formed on the place of inspection, a cannon
loaded with grape was run out on their flank, and they found
themselves at length face to face with the law. As I could
hardly blame the men for having up to this moment strictly
obeyed the orders of one who till this moment was undoubt-
edly their commander, having been placed over them by the
President himself, with instructions to hand them over to
me on his arrival, I now stepped forward to try their temper
and obedience myself. When within eight paces of the
centre of their little line, I told them my rank, the extent of my authority, and my fixed determination to be obeyed. I then gave the word "Attention! Rear rank take open order! March!" instantly followed by "Down with your arms!" (ground arms!) The majority obeyed at once; a few only, with murderous glances, hesitated. With presented rifle I repeated the order, when the last mutineer quailed. "To the left—about turn! Quick march!" brought them a hundred yards from their weapons. I followed them, and was about to have said something harsh, when I felt myself tipped on the shoulder by our quartermaster, who, seeing the trouble over, now lounged up. He whispered in my ear, "Don't be cross, old man! I remember we have been all rebels ourselves!" A laugh ended the affair. "The Gunn" and Cooper, with two others who had committed crimes, were imprisoned in different directions; the remainder had their choice to join our corps or go under sufficient escort back to the next settlement. The majority accepted the former proposition.

Even this utter downfall did not suffice to suppress "The Gunn." He attempted to open communications outside the fort, and although offered peace with honour if he would only apologise for his misconduct, began to put on airs, talked of complaining to the British Government, and made himself out a much ill-used person. He was consequently a nuisance, and was removed on horseback to Lydenberg, whence in due course of law he was sent to Pretoria, under the honourable escort of Lieutenant von Steitenron. It is to be regretted that in the capital a great many deluded persons patronised and treated him as a martyr. He was even, after his liberation from jail, appointed captain of a volunteer corps by Colonel Weatherly, a man of amiable disposition, but whose weakness of mind and easily flattered vanity left him open to imposition. "The Gunn" was also taken up for a time by society and the military. He has, however, succeeded in exposing his real self; his alleged want of scrupulosity in matters financial have led to inquiry; he is now, if telegrams are to be believed, a prisoner for sedition, having proved as false and troublesome to the new Government as he was to the old one. Of the band he had gathered

90  LYDENBERG VOLUNTEER CORPS.
together little need be said. The jail-birds went back to their old avocations; the others had their individuality stamped out, and after a while became assimilated to the other men of the Lydenberg Volunteer Corps. The piper abandoned his martial dress, and relapsed into the condition of an ordinary Lowland Scotchman.

By the beginning of February one-half of the horses supplied to us had died; we had but forty left at the fort. These were barely sufficient to keep open the road, protect waggons, and furnish a mounted guard for the cattle. We intended to wait, before making any attempt on a large scale, till the sickness would abate at the end of the summer, when an expedition in force—of Boers and Swazis—with an advance from the two forts, would bring the war entirely to an end, by the ruin of Secocoeni's tribe, then already starving. The arrival of Sir Theophilus Shepstone at Pretoria, with the distracted state of the country consequent on the intrigues of the Annexationists, unfortunately induced the President to accept the submission of the chief. On the 12th February peace was proclaimed along the border. The neighbouring Kafirs immediately (and this shows how little truth there was in the charges against us of having "embittered the war by atrocities") flocked eagerly to the fort, only taking the precaution of sending as avant-couriers two utterly miserable and starved boys, whom they no doubt imagined would not be likely to tempt our appetites if we were cannibals.

We now learned the details of many matters which had been hitherto obscure or doubtful. Amongst others we heard of the fate of a poor fellow named O'Reilly who had been lost from the great Commando in the August of the previous year. This man, finding his horse absent at morning muster, putting his saddle on his head, went heedlessly into the bush in search of the missing animal. This duty should have been only undertaken by a mounted patrol. The poor fellow lost his way, was captured, stripped naked, and roasted alive.

The volunteers and their late enemies met everywhere on very amicable terms; many recognised each other as having been acquainted in the relation of master and servant long before on the Diamond Fields. It was not a little remark-
able that the dressed natives who had experienced the influences of civilised labour, and learned, as Mr Trollope puts it, new wants and the value of wages, had been invariably our worst enemies, and were still advocates of a war of extermination against the whites. This was saddening and disappointing. Some of Secocoeni's most astute advisers were well acquainted with European habits, many of which they had adopted, especially a fondness for breeches and breech-loaders, in the use of which they were fairly proficient. In no case did we meet amongst them any who had escaped from domestic servitude under the Dutch.

In another chapter attention will be more fully drawn to the Dutch, in their capacity of masters and civilisers, where, after ten years' experience, I am now prepared to assert they have succeeded better than the English.

Our visitors were lavish in their compliments and praises of the conduct of the volunteers, and especially of Mr Eckersley, whom they christened the Bush Buck (Umbabala), because of his speed and pugnacity.

It will not be out of place here to record a singular instance of conscientiousness on the part of a savage, accompanied by a truthfulness and sacrifice of personal feeling worthy of a white man. Our Kafir Kameel's conduct on many occasions had been open to suspicion. It was asserted that he had twice delayed small forces on the march, and on one occasion with terribly fatal results. There was also evidence that often before delayed expeditions, on the occurrence of which, by the questions asked him as a spy, he might calculate, he had been noted lighting fires in unusual places and absenting himself without leave. It was also said that, knowing how much he had to fear from Schlieckmann's vengeance, he had himself fired the fatal shot that slew our commander. The bore of his gun, which was enormous, helped out this theory. A court was held, and Windvogel, our most faithful ally and Kameel's most deadly enemy, was called in evidence. He hated Kameel, and had killed the prisoner's brother but a short time previously. He knew that the court was strongly biassed against the suspected guide, but he spoke as follows:—

"Captain, you may kill Kameel if you wish; that is but
right—he is your dog; but he has not betrayed you. He should not have been brought to guide us to Mahera’s Kloof, where Schlieckmann was killed. His own people lived in that kraal. He had got his wife from there, and knew the way well. It may be that he delayed, thinking the captain would not attack after daylight, but he did not bring the men into a trap. I hate him! I want to kill him myself; but I must tell the truth. He is a great doctor, and his absences were in search of roots and plants, which he would never find elsewhere. The fires he lit, like every Kafir, who, if he can, will make fire, and sit in it on the warmest night. If you like I will take him away and kill him, but it is wrong!"

It is needless to say that this generous defence saved the man’s life. He was sent in safety to Kruger’s Post, in the neighbourhood of which he is now living, and doing, I fear, notwithstanding the want of evidence against him on the former occasion, considerable mischief to the English settlers.

Having now but few guards to keep, we determined to devote our leisure to a thorough exploration of Secocoeni’s country. There were miners and others amongst us who had only joined that they might be in the first flight over this very land, which was currently believed to afford everywhere indications that gold would be found in payable quantities. Leaving the prospectors to prepare the necessary material, accompanied by Ashton I now went to Lydenberg, where we established a hospital in view of coming calamity. By the 27th of February the fever was upon us. Its approach had long been expected. An easterly wind, blowing steadily from the sea, carried deadly vapours through the great poorts (gates, passes, openings) that led up from the lower bushveld into our valleys. Every morning a dull, bluish-grey haze lay along the ground, which rose slowly into the air, and became dissipated as the sun got higher. This haze, first noticed in September—and then only in the lower valleys—week after week rose higher, until, by the middle of February, it flooded all the low grounds, finally beginning to climb even above the level of the fort. The disease seized a man in various ways,—sometimes beginning
with drowsiness, succeeded by racking pains, followed by high fever, complete dilatation of the eyeballs, and death. In other cases it resembled jaundice, beginning with vomiting, but ending in muttered delirium and a low typhoid state, from which the patients but seldom recovered. In two or three cases the men died suddenly, after a few days' restlessness, want of energy, and appetite. Seventy miles to our rear, in the Crocodile River valley, whole families were swept away by this fatal scourge, which continued increasing in severity till the 18th May, after which there were no more new cases. Arsenic, in heroic doses, with cinchona bark, was found to be the only reliable remedy in the low stages of the disease. At one time, of sixty-four duty-men thirty-two were ill. Of course the loss of life was considerable. The death-rate seemed to be utterly unaffected by the previous habits of the patients; and drinkers and weakly worn-out men went off no quicker than did fine fellows in good condition, who had never drank spirits, or committed reprehensible excesses, in their lives.

New-comers who had arrived during the summer were much more liable to an attack than those even partially inured to the climate. The strongest, and those who did not suffer directly from the fever, yet felt the weakening and lowering effects of the pestilential miasma that filled the bush-country. Both men and horses got weak, sluggish, and disinclined for continued exertion. Even keen sportsmen gave up the gun and the rod for the pipe and the novel. Such was the fever of 1877. In my account of the present war I shall endeavour to point out the differences between it and the fever of 1878, which, in the same district, also cost the country many valuable lives.

In February also, towards the end of the month, we were suddenly called on to take part in the active life of a more civilised part of the country. Poor Captain Van Deventer was summoned from the other fort, with twenty-five of his men, to watch over the peace in Pretoria; whilst we were called upon to maintain the authority of the law on the New Caledonia Gold Fields.
CHAPTER V.

THE LYDENBERG VOLUNTEER CORPS AT THE GOLD FIELDS.

Surface diggings—The shop-boy aristocracy—An outrage—Peace-making—A gay and festive scene—"Sic transit."

The "Caledonian Gold Fields" were from the beginning most improperly named. They were not in Caledonia, and they were not Gold Fields—in fact, they had no pretense whatever to so broad and so significant a title. It had been known for years that "color" was to be got pretty well anywhere in the higher grounds of the Transvaal. "Color" means a few specks, perhaps hardly even perceptible, in the bottom of the prospecting basin after the washing of a properly selected shovelful of dirt (I don't mean dirt in the filthy acceptation of the word, but in the sense of gravel, mud, and pay-dirt generally). In some streams—noticeably Jokeskey River, Elands Spruit, and the Blyde—coarser gold had been met with. In 1872 and 1873, rushes broke out in a corner amongst the lofty mountains that hem in the Transvaal territory east of Lydenberg.

The principal discovery, made by Barrington and Osborne, resulted in little mining settlements being started about Pilgrim's Creek—a gully which contributes some water to the Blyde. The place is only accessible by going up and then down a steep mountain, the dangers of the road across which must for ever dwell in the memory of those who have journeyed to the so-called Gold Fields. The descent into the valley of the Blyde is sufficient to ruin any animal, and strain to pieces even the strongest of Africander waggons.
The hill consists of soapy shale, and the fall is something like a foot in twelve. This difficulty overcome, however, the visitor finds himself on a comparatively level spot, towards which numerous gorges and rocky valleys open. The view from the bottom is not ugly. A few pretty falls of water are to be seen tumbling from the surrounding mountains, which are in many places clothed with bush, marking, by their variety, the different degrees of temperature and elevation. The Blyde itself is, except during flood-time, an insignificant stream, flowing between recent alluvial banks. The “Pilgrim’s Creek,” which joins it from the valley, or rather long glen, in which the principal diggings are situate, with a fall of about a foot in fifty, has scooped for itself a deep distorted channel, that is now loaded with mud and tailings. The ground to the right, looking upwards—that is, on to the left bank of the creek where the mining village was built—is so narrowed between mountain and stream that it only affords room for one street, and that a very indifferent one. Embryo mountains, in fact, rise up abruptly from the backs of the houses on the one hand, while the shanties on the other side of the miserable thoroughfare appear to be constantly in danger of slipping over a steep bank. There is a “diggings,” and nothing more.

Attracted, however, by the puffs, and, I am afraid, the untruthful and exaggerated statements of persons interested in the prosperity of the place, during the years 1873, 1874, and 1875, large numbers of gold-seekers flocked to the new El Dorado. The place was no richer at its best than many parts of Wicklow; and I think I have heard of places, even in Sutherlandshire, where more gold was found and better wages earned within the last few years than ever rewarded the poor people that flocked to Pilgrim’s Rest.

However, there was a rush which, no doubt, gratified its promoters. Natal shopkeepers made little ventures in that direction; and Lydenberg, through which all transport for the Fields had to pass, assumed quite a busy aspect. Stores were piled up with goods; a few new houses were hastily constructed, and wagons thronged the streets of the little quiet Dutch village. Bankers, lawyers, parsons, and a newspaper, appeared suddenly at Pilgrim’s Rest, and, favoured
by heavy rains, the first season of the rush proved lucky for at least a few.

But the gold was not there—at least not in sufficient quantities or sufficiently payable to justify all the fuss and expense gone to about the place. When the claims most easily accessible to water were worked out, the diggers had to go higher and higher on the terraces. This necessitated the expensive leading of water, by flumes and artificial constructions, to the workings. Australians came and cursed the place. Men failed there as they do everywhere else. The ground was what is called “patchy.” One man might perhaps find a lump, or succeed in washing up well for weeks at a time, whilst his neighbours could never hit the lead,—and this for the very good reason that there was no regular lead to hit. Science and experience were utterly inapplicable; so that not unfrequently the best men had the worst luck. Geologists and mining engineers found themselves more at fault than the merest tyros in the art could possibly be. In fact, by 1875 the mining concern began to present a most unsatisfactory look-out. Then came bad seasons. The South African digger somehow falls into a habit of wanting all or most of the ruder portion of his labour done for him by blacks. Now the Kafirs did not take comfortably to gold-digging, most of them preferring the far-easier and better-paid labour of the distant diamond-mines. The diggings had the dry-rot. Poverty began to set in, and became more and more sharply felt as the bulk of the population came to the end of their little means, which they had to spend on tools and necessaries, whilst waiting for the fruition of their golden hopes. This was especially saddening to the hucksters, petty chandlers, and shopkeepers, who had already, in fond anticipation of wealth to come, elevated themselves into an aristocracy. They became discontented, and ceaselessly pressed on Government the necessity of what they called “opening up the country.” Everybody's rights should be set aside (theirs) the digging interest. They were “the people,” and the whole country should be taxed for their support. By-and-by to the evils of dear provisions and expensive transport were added those of neighbouring war.
The miners, though reduced in numbers by the most natural of all causes—the poverty of their diggings—were, before and at the beginning of the Secoceni war, a compact and influential little community of about 470 souls. Their discontent assumed the unpleasant form of hostility to the institutions they lived under. They wanted protection, and yet would not submit, in their own proper persons, to taxation. They desired that the whole country should be taxed in their interest; but they declined to live under its laws, and expected to be treated as a separate community, having distinct interests, which, in their opinion, were paramount and far superior to those of the State. They had a newspaper which soon fanned the flame. If the President was authoritative, the 'Gold Fields Mercury' called him an emperor; if he was too easy, the paper screamed for strong government.

Some of these people, I have no doubt, really believed that if a change of government could be brought about, the rains would become more plentiful; farms, land, and houses would rise in value; while claims and chandlers' little shops would become priceless;—in fact, that nothing was wanting to their prosperity but the removal of one Government and the substitution of another. Accordingly they wrote letters to Natal—and even to Sir Henry Barkly—representing themselves to be poor abandoned British subjects, in danger of being swallowed up at every moment by countless Kafir enemies. I am sorry to say that they went even a little farther than the truth in their representations. They filled the English press of neighbouring colonies with most absurd and exaggerated stories of Boer cowardice, volunteer atrocities, mis-government, and continual acts of petty tyranny and weakness, which had no foundation save in their own fears, their own turbulence, and their own reckless strivings after wealth where its materials did not exist.

At the very moment when they were loudest in calling for protection against Secoceni, they did their utmost to prevent a garrison being secured for Fort Burgers. In fact, they always did their best to embarrass the President and cripple his government. The after-history of these miserable people will point out, by the logic of incontrovertible fact,
how mistaken and unpatriotic was the course they permitted
themselves to be led into by their dominant faction—"the
huckster's party."

The gold-miners had been granted exceptional privileges,
and returned two members to the Volksraad or Parliament
of the country, whose views were ever listened to with
respect. If they made a bad choice, and sent men who
did not represent them properly to Parliament, the Re-
public is not to blame. It showed itself to be catholic
enough and liberal enough to welcome new blood, and to
seek the counsels of progressive men. Even this did not
please the Gold Fields community. They went on from
bad to worse; one of their idols was committed for con­
tempt of court by their magistrate—John Scoble—an
Englishman; and this event serving as an excuse for a
display of most unwarrantable passion, they released the
prisoner. It is painful to have to state the discreditable
fact that they added to this outrage personal insult to the
highly respectable gentleman filling the office of Gold Com­
missioner. They knocked him down, insulted his white
hairs, pulled his beard, and subjected him to vilifications
and indignities. Such conduct could not be permitted to con­
tinue. It had not been participated in by all the inhabi­tants of the Fields; in fact, considerable numbers viewed
the proceedings with displeasure. The rowdy element was
but a small part of the little mining community; but as it
had been encouraged and let loose by the workings of a
political party which loudly proclaimed itself to be "the
people," there was, for a moment, some danger that order
might be seriously disturbed. It was impossible to expect
impartiality from the insulted officials.

The chief of my district—Landdrost Roth—a man of
great tact, experience, and ability, was absent on a tax-
collecting tour. Captain von Brandis, formerly an officer
in the English service, requested me to intervene, and at
all events restore the rule of law and order. From the fort
was concentrated on Kruger's Post all our available horse­
men; and a guard of infantry accompanied Captain Reidel
and a cannon to a spot convenient for the assumption of the
offensive should hostilities ensue. If the whole of the popu-